

VZCZCXYZ0027
OO RUEHWEB

DE RUEHDM #0183/01 0171514
ZNR UUUUU ZZH (508)
O 171514Z JAN 06
FM AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 6595
RHEHAAA/WHITE HOUSE WASHDC IMMEDIATE
RUEHAM/AMEMBASSY AMMAN 5723
RUEHLB/AMEMBASSY BEIRUT 3622
RUEHEG/AMEMBASSY CAIRO 2078
RUEHRH/AMEMBASSY RIYADH 6852
RUEHTV/AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV 0709
RUEHAK/AMEMBASSY ANKARA 4211
RUEHJM/AMCONSUL JERUSALEM 0443
RHMFISS/HQ USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL//CCPA//
INFO RUEHNC/AMEMBASSY NICOSIA 6594

UNCLAS DAMASCUS 000183

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR PA, NEA/ARN, INR/IC/CD, INR/S:STHIBEAULT AND
JMCCARTER, VOA NEWS CA, NEA/PPD:CBURGEOIS, DBENZE AND
AFERNANDEZ, IIP/G/NEA-SA RWINCHESTER
WHITE HOUSE FOR NSC
CENTCOM FOR CCPA

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [KMDR](#) [PREL](#) [KPAO](#) [OPRC](#) [SY](#)

SUBJECT: Damascus Media Reaction: Lebanon, Iraq, Palestinian
Territories, Iran (1/17)

11. Summary: Syrian Papers reported additional statements by
Lebanese and Egyptian factions voicing support for Syria and
Hizbollah and condemning foreign intervention in Syrian and
Lebanese affairs.

On developments in the Palestinian territories, papers reported
commencement of Palestinian legislative elections in the West
Bank, despite Israeli obstacles. Headlines featured a statement
by Secretary of State Condaleeza Rice that the participation of
Hamis candidates in the Palestinian government jeopardizes
international efforts to establish a Palestinian state.

As for Iraq, papers reported the killing of two US pilots in a
helicopter crash in northern Baghdad and Iraqi President
Talabani's call to expand presidential decision-making authority.

On Iran's nuclear issue, papers cited a BBC interview with Saudi
FM Prince Saud al-Faisal in which he blamed the West for the
Iranian nuclear program, saying that Western nations' failure to
stop Israel from becoming a nuclear power "has done the damage we
are all suffering from now."

End summary.

12. Selected Headlines:

"Mounting Lebanese rejection of foreign intervention and
sedition. Student sit-ins call for persistence in resistance and
for enhancing relations with Syria" (Government-owned Tishreen,
1/17)

"Israeli violations of Lebanese airspace continue. Lebanese
parties and powers denounce Jumblatt's statements: They serve US
schemes. History will try him" (Government-owned Al-Thawra, 1/17)

"Egyptian intellectuals and politicians stress support for
Hizbollah and Syria against the US campaign and the fabrications
of its agents" (Government-owned Tishreen, 1/17)

"Palestinian elections commence in the West Bank under impossible
Israeli obstacles. US Secretary of States Rice hints at depriving

Palestinians of their right to establish an independent state if they elect Hamas" (Government-owned Tishreen, 1/17)

"Abbas will not run for re-election and says he can deal with Olmert" (Government-owned Syria Times, 1/17)

"Israel arrests 19 Palestinian activists. Spanish FM Moratinos confirms respect for Palestinians' choices" (Government-owned Al-Thawra, 1/17)

"The Iraqi Supreme Election Commission cancels results from 227 polling boxes. Iraqi President Talabani calls for expanding Presidential authority. A US helicopter is downed in northern Baghdad, killing two pilots" (Government-owned Tishreen, 1/17)

"The Iranian nuclear issue heats up. Russia objects to erroneous and violent steps. Saudi FM Al-Faisal: The West has contributed to building up Israeli nuclear arsenal and therefore shares responsibility" (Government-owned Al-Ba'th, 1/17)

13. Editorial Block Quotes:

"Brammertz's Reception"

Abdul-Fattah al-Awad, Chief Editor of government-owned Al-Thawra, commented (1/17): "Although Syria has always repeated its determination to demonstrate complete cooperation with the IIC, judging this cooperation will involve a lot of give-and-take so long as there is no definite standard by which to assess it.

"Cooperation is a bombastic and an amazingly broad and flexible

word, which allows anyone to stretch its meanings in whatever direction he wants and to assess it according to his own standards....

"Syria, which responded to the appointment of Mr. Brammertz as new head of the IIC by emphasizing its willingness to demonstrate 'full cooperation,' is going to have great interest in reaching an agreement on the standards that will be adopted in judging cooperation....

"Syria and the IIC must reach an agreement that determines the standards of cooperation and which will serve as an evenhanded yardstick for measuring the degree of cooperation. In the meantime, it is in no one's interest for the IIC to operate under an atmosphere of irresponsible statements, accusations and interferences, which do not lead to the desired results....

"The signing of such a protocol would represent the voice of wisdom and logic, as an alternative to the voices that aim to create an atmosphere of tension, which will cast its shadow on the region in general and on the investigation in particular.

"Some people are receiving Brammertz with an outpouring of nervous and wild statements, whereas Syria is receiving him with a call for a cooperation agreement."

"Who Believes Welch?"

Muhamed Khair al-Jamali, an editorialist in government-owned Al-Thawra, wrote (1/17): "US Assistant Secretary of State David Welch said in Beirut that he was visiting Lebanon to show support.... Was this support meant for the Lebanese people and their stability or for a handful of hired persons and agents, such as Walid Jumblatt, who are working tirelessly to internationalize the Lebanese situation in order to promote American interference and prevent the return of Syrian-Lebanese relations to their normal situation...? Welch's visit was meant to foil Arab efforts -- which were crowned by President Asad's talks in Jeddah and Sharm al-Sheikh -- to end tension in Lebanon and heal the rift in Syrian-Lebanese relations.

"The US Administration was displeased to see a constructive Arab role that would help fortify Lebanon and halt the plan that seeks to uproot it from its Arab environment and undermine its civil peace.... Therefore, this administration hastened to hinder these efforts and prevent them from achieving their noble pan-Arab objective of saving Lebanon from the conspiracy that aims to

bring the country back to the era of partition, fragmentation, and sectarian war.

"Welch's visit was part of this American effort, which claims to support Lebanon and its people, while actually harboring nothing but evil for Lebanon, Syria, and the rest of the Arabs.... Welch's statements in Beirut, in which he said that Washington rejects any deal at the expense of Lebanon, shows that the US Administration is determined to push ahead with its policy of separating Lebanon from its Arab role under the pretext of maintaining its sovereignty, and its policy of destabilizing Lebanon and perpetuating the estrangement between Lebanon and Syria in implementation of its Greater Middle East plan, which is based on the abolition of Arabism and the dissolution of the countries of the region into sectarian and ethnic entities."

"Traitors, and the Swamp of Disgrace"

Dr. Khalaf al-Jarad, an editorialist in government-owned Tishreen, commented (1/17): "The US Administration, in its effort to implement its Greater Middle East plan, which is stumbling in Iraq and facing strong opposition from Syria and the Arab resistance, is looking for local helpers [in Lebanon] with feudal, ethnic, and sectarian backgrounds. These local helpers falsely raise the slogans of democracy, freedom, and sovereignty, for they are well-known for their longstanding loyalties to countries and forces that have ambitions in Lebanon and the region, and for their absolute compliance with the 'lessons' of Satterfield and Feltman and the instructions of Rice, Bolton, and David Welch....

"The positions and abuses of these rancorous people, who are not loyal to their nation, identity, and the sacrifices of the resistance and their brothers, will not win the respect of their enemies or of the Americans. Indeed, they will only deepen their fall, degeneration, and plunge in the stinking swamp of

treachery, treason, and humiliation....

"Syria and the resistance derive their power and steadfastness from justice and from their heroic defense of their existence and dignity. Those who bet on the people and their national and pan-Arab pride will never lose. As for the intrusive plans, colonial schemes, conspiracies, pressures, and threats, they are not new to our people. Our people know them well and know how to foil them and expose their champions and their followers, the igniters of sedition and civil war, the perpetrators of massacres, and the ones who, in these difficult times, personify, greed hatred, rancor, and miserable loss."

"What About Israeli Nuclear Weapons?"

Muhammad al-Khadr, a columnist in government-owned Al-Ba'th, wrote (1/17): "The United States and the European Union exhibit flagrant hypocrisy when dealing with the Iranian nuclear file. They are eager, so they say, to prevent the spread of weapons of mass destruction in the world, in spite of the fact that the Iranian government has announced that its research is for scientific purposes and that it does not intend to produce atomic bombs....

"Today...the Iranian issue has become a priority on the agendas of US President George Bush and German Chancellor Angela Merkel, as well as European capitals, including Paris, London, and Rome, who threaten sanctions and referral of the case to the Security Council....

"In principle, the entire world would be happy if these accelerated steps were meant to preserve international security and peace and thus prevent the proliferation of nuclear weapons. However, the core of the matter is otherwise. Those who are worried about Iran are not really concerned about world peace: they have disregarded other areas of concern, most notably the Israeli nuclear arsenal of more than 300 nuclear warheads, according to estimates made by scientists and experts....

"President Bush was not embarrassed, at a press conference with Merkel, when he referred to the Iranian nuclear weapons as a threat to the world and Israel, without mentioning, directly or indirectly, the Israeli nuclear weapons, which threaten the entire world and not just the Arabs."
Seche